United Nations S/2007/576

Security Council

Distr.: General
28 September 2007

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 1233 (1999), by which the Council requested me to keep it regularly informed and to submit a report on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS). Subsequently, in paragraph 11 of its resolution 1580 (2004), the Council requested me to submit a written report to it every three months.

2. The report focuses on developments since my previous report (S/2007/401), in particular efforts to attain the Government's financial stability objectives and security sector reform and to improve political dialogue.

II. Political developments

3. During the period under review, the Government made concerted efforts to improve relations among the institutions of the State. Contrary to expectations, a debate on the Government programme was not included in the agenda of the National Assembly session held from 28 June to 20 July. The Government explained that the draft document had not been ready for submission to the Assembly by the stipulated deadline. Critics highlighted the need for the Government to legitimize its mandate and suggested that the reason for the delay might be uncertainty over support for the Government in parliament. The draft Government programme was eventually submitted to the National Assembly Bureau on 27 August. The Assembly is still in recess and its Permanent Commission has not yet met to set a date for an extraordinary session. The draft Government programme outlines the Government's main priorities as, inter alia, organizing legislative elections; restoring the authority of the State; pursuing national reconciliation; restoring the credibility of the country externally; and promoting cooperation with the international financial institutions. The document acknowledges that there is a need for profound reform of the justice sector and identifies six strategic areas, including the combat against organized crime and drug trafficking.

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4. Relations among State institutions improved during the period under review. The Prime Minister N'Dafa Cabi, accompanied President Vieira during his trip to the southern and eastern regions of Guinea-Bissau in mid-July. There have been regular institutional contacts between the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Prime Minister concerning parliamentary business. Government ministers and the Prime Minister visited the interior of the country. Representatives of the parties that signed the political stability pact, namely, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), the Social Renewal Party (PRS) and the United Social Democratic Party, met on 12 August to review developments. A communiqué issued after the meeting congratulated the Government on its performance. With regard to the continuing splits within the parliamentary parties and their negative impact on the stability of the Government and of parliament, the communiqué encouraged the parties to speed up intra-party reconciliation.

5. Questions were raised about the fragility of the consensus among the signatories of the pact after PRS, at a number of meetings, called for the Minister for Finance and the Minister for the Interior to be replaced by PRS appointees, in keeping with provisions in the pact which allocated those posts to that Party. On 22 August, the PRS spokesperson criticized the performance of both Ministers and referred in that connection to the continuing problem of salary arrears. He criticized the Minister for the Interior, Major Baciro Dabó, for controversial remarks which, PRS said, might instigate ethnic violence. The Party has, however, denied that its demand for the two portfolios would jeopardize the future of the Government. The possibility of changes in the Finance Ministry team has caused concern among the international and financial institutions interested in ensuring the continuity and progress that are vital to the implementation of agreed fiscal reform measures.

6. President Vieira reiterated that decisions regarding the Cabinet were within the competence of the Prime Minister. My Representative met the Prime Minister on 14 September to stress the need for an urgent solution to the demand by PRS for the two Ministries. The Prime Minister was confident that a solution would be found through the internal mechanisms of the pact.

7. During his consultations in the provinces, President Vieira suggested combining legislative and presidential elections in 2009. He said that the Government was working well and that joint elections would be more economical. Legislative elections are to be held in 2008 and presidential elections in 2010. Following strong objections by some political party leaders, a statement issued by the President's press office on 19 July clarified that that was a suggestion, not an imposition. There are conflicting views on the date of the elections, some people advocating that they should be held in March or April 2008 on the grounds that the previous legislative elections were held in March 2004. Others take the view that elections should be held between 25 October and 25 November, as stipulated in the electoral law. On 12 September, the Executive Secretary of the National Electoral Commission warned that the Commission needed to clear debts of 124 million CFA francs accrued as a result of previous elections in order to prevent disruptions in the coming elections. The United Nations is to send an assessment mission to Guinea-Bissau in response to a request from the Government for electoral assistance.

8. With regard to its efforts to improve relations with international partners, the Government continued to pursue its diplomatic offensive to enhance the external credibility of the country and mobilize political and economic resources to enable it

to pursue the goals set out in its Minimum Public Finance Stability Programme. The Prime Minister visited Senegal on 1 August. On 4 August, he visited South Africa in his capacity as Third Vice-President of PAIGC, at the invitation of the African National Congress. The Prime Minister then visited Botswana on 8 August. On 10 August, a delegation from the International Contact Group on Guinea-Bissau, led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso and including the President of the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), paid a three-day visit to Bissau to prepare for the International Contact Group meeting in New York on 24 September. The Prime Minister visited Portugal on 29 August and Equatorial Guinea on 3 September. A delegation from the Government of Angola, led by the Minister for Public Works, visited Guinea-Bissau within the framework of bilateral cooperation.

9. The participative dialogue programme led by the National Institute for Studies and Research and Interpeace — Voz di Paz/Voice of Peace — was officially launched on 19 July at a ceremony chaired by President Vieira. The programme has been active since April, and 12 platforms for dialogue have been set up throughout the country. Those regional platforms serve as a link between the steering committee of the project and the people. Their tasks include facilitating regular meetings with administrative, traditional and religious leaders; identifying traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms; and promoting the specific role of women, as well as the importance of community radio, in peacebuilding. Voz di Paz/Voice of Peace is currently funded by the United Nations Democracy Fund, Finland and Portugal. UNOGBIS is supporting the Estados Gerais dialogue initiative through a grant of $73,300 from the Guinea-Bissau trust fund of the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat. This will help to complete the cycle of nationwide consultations with stakeholders that started in 2006, to set up a communication unit to design and implement an outreach strategy, and to establish a permanent secretariat. Under the capacity-building programme for parliament, funded by the United Nations Democracy Fund and coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) and UNOGBIS trained, in the period from 18 to 22 June, 16 parliamentarians and 2 National Assembly staff members, including 4 women parliamentarians, in leadership skills. The same group will be trained in conflict transformation skills by UNOGBIS and SNV late in September. SNV and UNOGBIS are also facilitating the organization, in October 2007, of a conference of women parliamentarians and civil society leaders from Senegal and Guinea-Bissau on cross-border conflicts. UNOGBIS also organized a training workshop in conflict transformation skills for 14 members of civil society organizations, including 6 female participants. A training of trainers programme in conflict transformation is planned for October.

III. Economic and social aspects

10. During the period under review, the socio-economic and financial situation in Guinea-Bissau has remained stable but fragile. An analysis of revenue and expenditure in July and August shows mixed results. There has been a marked improvement in revenue, but, despite the fact that the Treasury Committee is working well in its efforts to promote transparency and accountability in the management of public funds, the Government is still facing structural problems in curbing expenditure. August salaries are expected to be paid in the second half of

September. The Government is up to date with the payment of salaries earned since it took office in April, but it has not cleared the February and March salary arrears that it inherited from the previous Government. The payment of a $13 million bonus following the signing, early in September, of a protocol between the Governments of Guinea-Bissau and Angola for a commercial bauxite mining venture will contribute significantly towards enabling the Government to close the 2007 budget gap. The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund met on 17 September in the context of an article IV review to continue ongoing talks for emergency post-conflict assistance. The African Development Bank (ADB) lifted sanctions against Guinea-Bissau on 10 August on receipt of $3.5 million paid by the Government for the debt-servicing payments due in January and July. The funds were from budgetary support pledged by ECOWAS at the round-table conference. That will pave the way for the continuation of ongoing ADB projects, such as the rehabilitation of the Simão Mendes National Hospital and the fisheries port in Bissau. The ADB five-year rural rehabilitation project, funded from an $8.5 million grant, was launched in the second half of September during the visit to Bissau of an ADB delegation that arrived on 14 September. On 13 July, the Governments of Spain and Guinea-Bissau signed a multisectoral cooperation agreement for 2007-2009 worth €15 million. The agreement covers the area of democratic governance and the social sectors. On 9 August, the two Governments undertook to develop a vocational training programme aimed at tackling youth unemployment. On 21 August, the Governments of Portugal and Guinea-Bissau signed an annual cooperation plan for 2007 worth €9.8 million. A memorandum of understanding was signed by the two States on the same day for assistance in combating drug trafficking.

11. It is estimated that 94,000 tons of cashew nuts have been exported to date in 2007 at an average price of $486 per ton. That exceeds last year's exports of 73,400 tons. However, the depressed prices on the international market and the depreciation of the dollar against the euro, to which the CFA franc is tied on a fixed-parity basis, will negatively affect public revenue from this source. The potential social impact of the current cashew season is not encouraging. Farmers were selling their crop at between FCFA 50 and 75 per kilogram, below the non-binding Government reference price of FCFA 200 per kilogram. Cashew is important for food security as it is commonly bartered for rice, the staple food. The food security situation has been further undermined by late and inadequate rains, as well as by degraded rice fields. In July, the Ministry of Agriculture, with the support of the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, undertook a food security monitoring survey which confirmed that there had been degradation of food security in August and September.

12. There has been a series of strikes by health, utilities and Bissau municipal workers in connection with salary arrears and subsidies. The supply of running water, as well as that of electricity, which was already limited, has been further disrupted over the past four months because the electricity and water company does not have the funds necessary for it to function normally.

13. On 3 August, the National Union of Workers of Guinea-Bissau (UNTG) organized a march attended by trade unionists, activists from a broad spectrum of parties and the general public to express concern against the growth in drug trafficking in the country and to highlight the dangers of drugs to society. UNTG called for the creation of a national observatory against drug trafficking and called

on President Vieira and the international community to support the initiative. The common perception is that Guinea-Bissau is essentially a trans-shipment point and that there is no local drug consumption, but the rise in the number of crack cocaine users undergoing treatment at the only rehabilitation unit in the country run by a non-governmental organization (NGO) would seem to contradict it.

14. On 9 July, the Government and the United Nations country team signed the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Guinea-Bissau for the period 2008-2012, budgeted at $116 million. The second and final stages of the anti-tetanus campaign targeting women, financed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) with technical support from the World Health Organization (WHO), was conducted late in July. UNICEF, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, has also been organizing intensive teacher training courses as part of a global programme to improve the skills of teachers with no previous training and to update trainers. WHO is assisting the Ministry of Health in establishing a national plan for medical development and has provided advice to the Ministry in connection with the preparation of a proposal to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria for programme funding. The number of adults receiving antiretroviral treatment increased from 496 in the first quarter of 2007 to 834 in August.

15. On 11 July, I received a letter from the Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau requesting that his country be placed on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission. That request was supported by the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries. I have brought that request to the attention of the Security Council. If the Security Council deems Guinea-Bissau to be eligible, it will refer the request to the Peacebuilding Commission.

IV. Military and security aspects

16. The Security Sector Reform Technical Coordinating Committee, which was largely dormant during the first half of 2007, resumed its functions in June and made considerable progress towards preparing a plan of action for 2007-2009. The plan of action was approved by the Security Sector Reform Steering Committee on 13 September. It focuses on four sectors — defence, security, justice and veterans' affairs — and delineates responsibilities and the sequencing of activities to which the Government attaches priority. The overall cost is estimated at $184.3 million. According to the plan, the Government will cover 10 per cent of the cost. Pledges account for 23.4 per cent and the remaining 76.6 per cent will need to be raised.

17. UNOGBIS organized four workshops from 9 to 29 August, for specialists from the justice, security, defence and veterans' affairs sectors to outline the broad scope of the plan of action and the specific activities envisaged for its effective implementation. UNOGBIS also facilitated the organization of a workshop for approximately 150 military and law enforcement personnel, including the Chief of General Staff and service chiefs, to promote the implementation of the plan of action. The Technical Coordinating Committee stressed the need to complete a credible census of all security sector personnel, and UNDP is providing technical support for the exercise.

18. On 8 August, a defence cooperation agreement was signed by the Governments of Guinea-Bissau and of South Africa in the areas of training, procurement, technology and health.

19. The report of the United Nations inter-agency mission, which visited Bissau in May to reactivate the small arms project, was submitted to the Government for approval. UNOGBIS assisted the National Commission against the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in drawing up terms of reference and analysing the memorandum of understanding that came out of that mission. On 6 September, UNOGBIS facilitated a workshop to enable the National Commission to finalize its workplan for the last quarter of 2007 for submission to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the ECOWAS Small Arms Control Project.

20. UNOGBIS military advisers have provided guidelines and training materials for the preparation of a battalion to integrate the ECOWAS standby peacekeeping force. In October, UNOGBIS military advisers will hold a training of trainers workshop.

21. The use of Guinea-Bissau as a transit point for illegal drugs coming from Latin America and bound for Europe raises ever more concern for society in the country, as well as for the country's international partners. At a ceremony on 31 July, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Maria da Conceição Nobre Cabral, handed to my Representative the documents ratifying the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its additional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, as well as the United Nations Convention against Corruption. The ceremony was organized to coincide with a mission of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to Bissau from 30 July to 1 August. The Minister stressed that the country needed international assistance to enable it to control its borders and modernize its legislation. In August, the Government launched an emergency plan against drug trafficking to mobilize internal, subregional and international efforts to fight drug trafficking in the country and the subregion. Two of its specific objectives are institutional and operational capacity-building, and include defining the mandates of international agencies working in this area, as well as inter-agency technical and operational cooperation. Officials investigating drug trafficking are particularly vulnerable to pressure and threats from those involved in organized crime. A critical issue that needs to be addressed with urgency, therefore, is the protection of such courageous public servants. My Representative has been discussing that issue with the authorities and with anti-crime organizations in the subregion.

22. In August, in response to increasing reports on the landing, in the Bijagos archipelago, of unidentified aircraft suspected of transporting cocaine, the Chief of General Staff announced the deployment of anti-aircraft artillery to the archipelago. Early in September, investigations resumed into the alleged involvement of several high-level officials of the Government of the former Prime Minister, Aristides Gomes, in the disappearance of 670 kilograms of cocaine seized by the authorities. That followed the transmission in July of the preliminary report by an ad hoc inter-ministerial commission to the Prime Minister. Following investigations by the national criminal investigation police and INTERPOL, two Colombian nationals were arrested on 18 August and charged with illegal possession of firearms and money-laundering. Investigations leading to their possible extradition to Colombia are being coordinated by the Ministry of Justice of Guinea-Bissau, with the facilitation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and INTERPOL. On 27 July, 10 Nigerian nationals were arrested in Bissau in possession of 5 kilograms of cocaine in the form of capsules and small balls, reflecting the growing trend of recruiting subregional drug couriers for transit through Guinea-Bissau. There is no

reliable data available on drug seizures, the volume of drugs in transit through Guinea-Bissau or the local consumption of narcotics. However, there is a growing consensus that Guinea-Bissau is a major drug trafficking transit point in the subregion.

23. Following an urgent request by the Ministry of Justice in August, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime provided the judicial police with a small quantity of investigative equipment and facilitated the establishment of links between the criminal investigation police of Guinea-Bissau and INTERPOL, as well as with their counterparts in the region and throughout the world. Clearly, further technical assistance is needed. The joint project undertaken by UNDP, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UNOGBIS for the placement of an officer of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Bissau has been finalized, and the officer is expected to be deployed before the end of the year. ECOWAS, with technical support from the United Nations, plans to convene a regional conference on drug trafficking later this year, and preparations — in which UNOGBIS is actively involved — are ongoing.

24. During the period under review, the national Mine Action Coordination Centre, supported by UNDP, continued to focus its efforts on areas in and around the capital and the northern border area. Mine action activities funded by UNDP and the Government of the United States of America are being carried out by the national NGO Lutamos Todos Contra as Minas in partnership with the international NGO Cleared Ground, and by the national NGO HUMAID, partnered by the international NGO Landmine Action. Technical assistance has also been received from United States air force personnel from the European Command. From June to August, 158,098 square metres of land were cleared and 2,214 pieces of unexploded ordnance, 8 anti-personnel and 7 anti-tank mines and 414 blasting caps were destroyed.

V. Human rights aspects

25. The period from July to August 2007 was marked by tensions over concerns by civil society organizations regarding what they saw as pressures relating to freedom of the press and freedom of expression in connection with their reports on drug trafficking. Journalists reporting on drug trafficking in the country complained of pressure and intimidation. On 24 July, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) expressed concern about acts of intimidation and called on the Government to ensure that the intimidation ended. IFJ, in a letter to President Vieira dated 3 September, referred specifically to the cases of two journalists, one of whom was charged with libel after a complaint was lodged against him by the Chief of Staff of the Navy for allegedly suggesting that the officer might have been linked to drug trafficking. IFJ expressed concerns that the journalist might not receive a fair trial, and furthermore urged the Government and officials of the armed forces to ensure that journalists reporting on drug trafficking could work in total safety and freedom. Those developments marked a reversal in the positive trend of the past three years, during which time Guinea-Bissau was not cited by the press watchdog Reporters sans frontières as being among those countries with a poor record of respect for freedom of the press.

26. A human rights activist, Mário Sá Gomes, went into hiding when a warrant for his arrest was issued by the Prosecutor General following a radio interview on 9 July in which he expressed his views on the alleged involvement of military personnel in drug trafficking in the country. Mr. Gomes subsequently sought protection in United Nations premises from 9 to 23 August. UNOGBIS and civil society organizations were closely involved in mediating a solution with the national authorities. Mr. Gomes left the United Nations premises on 23 August, after my Representative obtained assurances from the Minister for the Interior, on behalf of the Government, that he would not be harmed or arrested and would be offered protection by the Government. UNOGBIS has been in regular contact with the judicial authorities to urge them to ensure that freedom of expression is respected and that due process is followed in cases of libel. Late in September, the UNOGBIS information unit will be launching a newsletter about the Office's activities. As from October, it will also initiate a new cycle of radio programmes and training for journalists.

27. During the period under review, UNOGBIS continued to follow the case of the three persons who, in connection with the fighting in March 2006 on the northern border with the Casamance region of Senegal, were found guilty, by the regional military court in April 2007, of treason and collaboration with the enemy. The detainees later lodged an appeal with the military high court. When UNOGBIS was finally granted access to the detainees on 8 August, it transpired that one of them was a Senegalese citizen, not a member of the security forces. The military high court is expected to discuss the appeal late in September. The detainees are allowed to receive family visits, and the International Committee of the Red Cross has regular access to them.

28. The national authorities are also increasingly concerned about the growing incidence of illegal migration, especially as the authorities do not have the capacity to handle the case load. Many of the migrants are reported to be from neighbouring countries and do not possess any documentation. Many are detained for extended periods without charge.

29. UNOGBIS, in partnership with the Faculty of Law of Bissau, organized a seminar on 27 June for 17 parliamentarians on the subject of amnesty. It was the last in a series of three seminars for parliamentarians and was followed, on 18 and 19 July, by a seminar on the same subject for 23 civil society organizations. On 15 and 16 August, UNOGBIS human rights and civilian police units conducted an assessment mission to the regional police stations in Farim, Bafatá and Gabú to evaluate and follow up on the training sessions conducted in 2006 on a code of conduct and on the use of force. A subsequent survey of the population revealed that there was a general feeling that the training had produced little tangible progress, owing largely to lack of motivation because of concerns about unpaid salary arrears and corruption. On 23 and 24 August, 54 police officers were trained in Bissau by UNOGBIS on basic human rights standards related to law enforcement, ethics, codes of conduct and the use of force. That was the last session of the training cycle that started in 2006.

30. The National Institute for the Development of Education organized a workshop from 22 to 24 August, funded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, to help formulate a draft policy and strategy document on the promotion and development of education for the culture of peace, citizenship,

human rights and democracy. The document will be submitted to the Minister for Education for approval.

VI. Observations and recommendations

31. While progress has been made over the past few months, especially in the areas of public finance and cooperation with international financial institutions, the country continues to face enormous challenges, including political partisanship, machinations among political actors, simmering social discontent and the alarming threat posed by drug trafficking and organized crime. Unless those issues are urgently and constructively addressed, the important achievements made towards consolidating the country's nascent democratic and constitutional order could be jeopardized. I am concerned about the fact that, while the political stability pact continues to provide a platform for a more consensual approach to governance and for Government sustainability, the continuing divisions and rivalry for power among political parties could undermine crucial stabilization efforts and discourage the country's partners and potential investors. The pact therefore needs to be consolidated.

32. I commend the Government for the positive measures taken so far to implement the security sector reform programme, which is a key component of the country's public administration reform process. As endorsement of the reform efforts by parliament is essential for mobilizing resources and engaging partners in this endeavour, I urge the National Assembly to take urgent legislative action on the programme.

33. Drug trafficking threatens to subvert the nascent democratization process of Guinea-Bissau, entrench organized crime and undermine respect for the rule of law. Given the country's inability to combat this new phenomenon alone, a collective response is required. Vital technical and financial support from regional and international partners is therefore urgently needed. Guinea-Bissau must join forces with regional and international partners to tackle this growing threat through cooperation within law enforcement frameworks.

34. I am pleased with the close cooperation between the United Nations and ECOWAS to develop synergies and an integrated approach to combating drug trafficking in Guinea-Bissau. I look forward to the successful holding of the proposed regional conference on the subject, which ECOWAS intends to convene later this year, aimed at developing a plan of action to deal with the challenge, and I pledge the full support of the United Nations for that important initiative. Besides calling for logistical, technical and financial resources from the international community, I urge anti-crime agencies to coordinate legal and technical cooperation and find ways of bolstering the personal safety of those courageous officials in Guinea-Bissau who dedicate themselves to the fight against organized crime.

35. Given recent developments on the ground, the time may have come to adopt a holistic approach to tackling the many complex problems that Guinea-Bissau faces. The Secretariat and the country team are constantly reviewing and assessing various options to see how best we can provide effective assistance for national efforts in order to contribute to the sustainable stabilization of Guinea-Bissau. I will submit to the Council specific proposals on the way forward.

36. I would like to conclude by commending the staff of UNOGBIS, under the leadership of my Representative, Shola Omoregie, as well as the personnel of the entire United Nations country team, for the important work that they continue to carry out in Guinea-Bissau, often under challenging circumstances.